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The dysfunctions of power in teams: A review and emergent conflict perspective

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ABSTRACT

We review the new and growing body of work on power in teams and use this review to develop an emergent theory of how power impacts team outcomes. Our paper offers three primary contributions. First, our review highlights potentially incorrect assumptions that have arisen around the topic of power in teams and documents the areas and findings that appear most robust in explaining the effects of power on teams. Second, we contrast the findings of this review with what is known about the effects of power on individuals and highlight the directionally oppositional effects of power that emerge across different levels of analysis. Third, we integrate findings across levels of analysis into an emergent theory which explains why and when the benefits of power for individuals may paradoxically explain the potentially negative effects of power on team outcomes. We elaborate on how individual social comparisons within teams where at least one member has power increase intra-team power sensitivity, which we define as a state in which team members are excessively perceptive of, affected by, and responsive to resources. We theorize that when power-sensitized teams experience resource threats (either stemming from external threats or personal threats within the team), these threats will ignite internal power sensitivities and set into play performance-detracting intra-team power struggles. This conflict account of power in teams integrates and organizes past findings in this area to explain why and when power negatively affects team-level outcomes, and opens the door for future research to better understand why and when power may benefit team outcomes when power's dark side for teams is removed.

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In May 1985, Apple's CEO, John Sculley, proposed a plan to the board of directors to remove Steve Jobs from his beloved Macintosh group and to put himself in charge of New Product Development. Sculley and Jobs had not been seeing eye-to-eye about resource distributions within Apple. Jobs had wanted to invest more resources into the new Macintosh, while Sculley wanted to focus on the older but more successful Apple II. After Jobs heard of Sculley's power move, he was furious and immediately strategized a counterattack to get rid of Sculley and re-take Apple. This epic power struggle between these two high-power figures (which tormented Apple for many years and led to Jobs' temporary resignation) is now frequently told as a cautionary tale in Silicon Valley for how relationships between founders and their CEO replacements can go awry.

When power emerges as a bone of contention in teams, such as in the case between Sculley and Jobs, team outcomes can be severely impaired (Greer & Van Kleef, 2010). Understanding when and why power can become contested in teams, or groups of three to ten people whom work together interdependently towards a common task goal (Argote & McGrath, 1993; Hackman, 1992; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006), has therefore become an important area of research within organizational behavior. To illustrate, numerous team-level studies on power (e.g., Bloom, 1999; Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017) have shown that power and politics go hand-in-hand in teams with a single power holder (i.e., high power-dispersed teams; e.g., Bloom, 1999; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Shaw et al., 2002; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017; for a meta-analysis on team power-dispersion, see Greer, De Jong, Schouten, & Dannals, 2017) or multiple power holders (i.e. high power-level teams; e.g., Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Greer, Caruso, & Jehn, 2011; Groysberg, Polzer, & Elfenbein, 2011; Hildreth & Anderson, 2016; Shen & Cannella, 2002). In teams with lower power dispersion and/or power-levels, power struggles and conflicts appear to be substantially less. Power struggles, in turn, have routinely been demonstrated to harm the ability of teams to function and perform (e.g., Bendersky & Hays, 2012; Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Kilduff, Willer, & Anderson, 2016; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017).

The research which has documented the negative effects of power in teams is important in helping organizations learn how to optimize team effectiveness and to prevent team performance failures. However, the ability of research to be successfully applied to organizations depends ultimately on the strength of the underlying paradigm (Pfeffer, 1993). Therefore, concerns arise from the growing disconnect between this line of research on the negative picture of power in teams (e.g., Tarakci, Greer, & Jehn, 2016) and the positive picture of power that has been documented in individual-level research on power (for reviews, see Fiske, 2010; Galinsky et al., 2012; Galinsky, Rucker, & Magee, 2016; Guinote, 2007; Smith & Galinsky, 2010; Tost, 2016). Namely, power has been shown to offer individual actors a host of benefits, including an increased desire and ability to pursue goals (e.g., Guinote, 2007; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003), enhanced executive functioning (Smith, Dijksterhuis, & Wigboldus, 2008), and even improved life satisfaction (Anderson, Kraus, Galinsky, & Keltner, 2012; Kifer, Heller, Perunovic, & Galinsky, 2013). Work in this line has also shown that these benefits are relatively stable — low power individuals were found to lack the ability or motivation to change their position, and to often (paradoxically) support the systems and hierarchy which suppress them (e.g., Keltner et al., 2003; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). This line of work was also extended to initial predictions on how power should shape teams, with initial key theories on power in groups and teams proposing power to be a stable and beneficial quality for teams (e.g., Halevy, Chou, & Galinsky, 2011; Tannenbaum, 1962; Tiedens & Fragale, 2003). However, the emerging empirical findings on power in teams suggest that power may shape teams differently than it does individuals. While power may make individuals feel empowered and lead them to pursue their goals (e.g., Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003), power within teams may actually make people more focused on their dependencies and vulnerabilities towards one another (e.g., Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017) and may resultantly often be contested and unstable (e.g., Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Hays & Bendersky, 2015).

We seek here to understand how the emergent work on the dark side of power in teams can be reconciled with the long-standing literature on the benefits of power to individuals as well as with initial theories on the functionality of power for teams. We begin with the general premise that context matters — contexts can widely vary in organizational research

(Brief & Smith-Crowe, 2016), and contexts can fundamentally shape how information, such as power, is understood and interpreted (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Therefore, identifying when theories apply across contexts or are specific to certain settings is critical. When applying this lens to the study of power, we suggest that in the context of organizational teams, where members all know each other and regularly interact towards the achievement of a common goal, power may exert effects that have not been captured in past research on the individual benefits of power. Past studies on the benefits of power for individuals were largely conducted in isolation of actual social interaction (e.g., Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Fast, Gruenfeld, Sivanathan, & Galinsky, 2009; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008; Lammers, Dubois, Rucker, & Galinsky, 2013), focused on individual rather than team outcomes (e.g., Kilduff & Galinsky, 2013; Schmid & Schmid Mast, 2013; Overbeck, Neale, & Govan, 2010; Van Kleef, De Dreu, Pietroni, & Manstead, 2006), and/or examined power in contexts where power was largely immutable (i.e. gender gaps in society; Dovidio, Ellyson, Keating, Heltman, & Brown, 1988; Schultheiss, Wirth, Torges, Pang, Villacorta, & Welsh, 2005). Theories which emerge from such contexts may not necessarily hold true in more complex, dynamic organizational settings (cf. Brief & Smith-Crowe, 2016).

Indeed, in organizational teams, in contrast to individuals working in laboratory environments often in the absence of social interaction, social comparisons around power are more likely and power positions themselves are more mutable (e.g., Hays & Bendersky, 2015). In teams, people with and without power directly interact with one another in the team task context, perceive each other's power, and choose whether to accept or challenge each other's power. Indeed, in such team task contexts, DeRue and Ashford (2010) suggest that members frequently make claims upon one another to legitimize and/or promote one's own power and influence, and the others in the team have the choice to grant these claims or not. A growing line of research suggests that a large number of such claims are actually denied, and that power in teams is frequently challenged and renegotiated (e.g., Bendersky & Hays, 2012; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Kilduff et al., 2016; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017). This suggests that research on power in the context of teams may have yielded a more negative picture than that given by research on power at the individual-level because power in the context of task tasks is more readily perceived, contested, and changed.

We review here this growing body of work on power in team contexts, compare it to what is known about the effects of power on the individual level, and then theoretically refine and integrate the paradigms and assumptions in both of these areas to develop an understanding of how both areas can, together, explain why and when power negatively impacts team outcomes. By understanding the processes by which power negatively affects teams, and when such negative processes are likely to be turned on or turned off, we open the door for future research to build on our knowledge to start to better unpack why and when power may have the potential to benefit teams.

We therefore make three contributions with this paper. First, with our review of the literature on power in teams, we qualify, challenge, and extend existing theories and assumptions on the topic of power. Our review suggests that positive perspectives on power in the team setting were too directly derived from the individual-level research, which may not apply in the same way in teams, and need to be redrawn to be better tailored to the specific team context. Additionally, our review suggests that at this point in the literature, negative conflict accounts appear to be more robust when examining power in teams. Second, we provide a needed comparison of the literature on what power does to teams to the literature on the effects of power on individuals. We use this comparison to highlight the directionally oppositional effects of power that have emerged across these different levels of analysis, offering insight into how the nature and dynamics of power may change across contexts. Third, we integrate findings at both the team and individual-levels of analysis to develop an emergent conflict account of how the benefits of power for individuals may paradoxically translate into negative outcomes at the team-level. This allows us to provide a lens to understand how disparate findings fit together and to offer a broad range theory to help guide future research in this area. Specifically, we theorize that because power offers numerous benefits for the power-holder, this can lead power to be a salient basis for social comparisons in teams where one or more members hold power. This implies that the effects of power-possession at the individual level can create a sensitivity, or awareness of and reactivity to power within the team setting. When such power-sensitized teams face external resource threats (such as uncertainty in the external environment or inter-team competition) or personal resource threats within the team (such as perceived illegitimacy or factionalization into subgroups), we propose that teams will descend into performance-detracting power struggles. When such threats are absent, the dark side of power will remain contained, and future research can seek to understand how, why, and when power can be harnessed to benefit team outcomes.

Definitions of power in teams

Consistent with prior research in social psychology and organizational behavior, we adopt the most commonly used definition for the basic construct of power – control over valued resources (Blau, 1964; Fiske, 2010; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Power holders have the capacity to influence other's attitudes and behaviors as well as the capacity to resist others' influence (Barkow, 1975; Cartwright, 1965; Emerson, 1962; Goldhamer & Shils, 1939; Kemper, 1990; Kipnis, 1972). In understanding power, gaining insight into the different resources upon which power can be based is important. Namely, resources which can afford power must be subjectively consequential (e.g., materials, rewards, job title, information access, etc.) and important. When someone possesses a resource, which is not seen as

valuable to others, the person cannot be said to have power. When studying power in the context of teams, teams naturally contain a variety of valuable resources, including material (e.g., money, food, economic opportunity, professional security, physical safety, etc.), social (e.g., knowledge, information, expertise, affection, friendship, social approval, decision-making opportunities, etc.), and cultural resources (habitus, taste, style of speech and dress, etc.) (Bourdieu, 1989; Domhoff, 1998; French & Raven, 1959; Keltner et al., 2003). Different frameworks have proposed different components of power (such as coercive, reward, legitimate, reference, and informational bases of power as proposed by French & Raven, 1959), and there has been much debate in the literature on whether different power bases differ or converge in their effects.

One popular comparison has been between formal power (i.e., asymmetric organizational resource control; Magee & Galinsky, 2008) and informal power, or status (i.e., respect, prestige, admiration and esteem that a party has in the eyes of others (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Blader & Chen, 2012; Blader & Yu, 2017; Henrich & Gil-White, 2001; Ridgeway, 2001; Ridgeway & Walker, 1995; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1985). The basis of these forms differs in that formal power reflects the actual control of tangible resources and is a property of the actor and informal power reflects the control one has been socially conferred by others and is a property of co-actors and observers (Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1972; Blau, 1964; Chen et al., 2012; Homans, 1961; Goldhamer & Shils, 1939; Ridgeway, 1984; Ridgeway & Erickson, 2000). While the effects of formal and informal power have been found to differ at the individual-level of analysis (see Blader & Chen, 2012, 2014; Fast, Halevy, & Galinsky, 2012; Hays & Bendersky, 2015), a recent meta-analysis found no systematic differences among the bases of power when analyzed at the team-level of analysis (Greer, De Jong et al., 2017; Greer, Van Kleef et al., 2017). We therefore cover all studies which could potentially come under the umbrella of power, across all potential power bases, including studies which measure power via formal roles (Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017), expertise (Tarakci et al., 2016), referent position or status (Hays & Bendersky, 2015), legitimate control of resources such as outside alternatives to negotiation outcomes in negotiation studies (e.g., Brett, Pinkley, & Jacofsky, 1996; Pinkley, Neale, & Bennett, 1994), and salary (e.g., Bloom, 1999; Halevy et al., 2012).[1] We note that these bases are only reliable measures of power when they are socially valued in a team. For example, salary is a proxy for power in a team only when it is publically known and valued. By taking a broad stance in our review, this allows us to be inclusive of the different approaches that exist to the study of power in teams and to have the broadest overview possible of the work in this area.

When investigating power in the context of teams, or interacting groups, researchers have had to find ways to conceptualize and operationalize power at the team-level of analysis. Similar to other research which has sought to understand how individual traits and properties, such as personality or values, can be compiled to the team level (Bliese, Chan, & Ployhart, 2007; Chan, 1998; Harrison & Klein, 2007; Stewart et al., 2005), those researching power at the team level of analysis have investigated different ways to conceptualize power at the team level. The two primary conceptualizations of power in teams thus far are team power-level and team power-dispersion (cf. Greer, 2014).

Team power-level is defined as a team's control of valued resources in an organization or broader social system (Greer et al., 2011). A team's resource control could come from the average of individual members within the team. Team power-level, in this form, is at its highest when all members within the team hold a high level of power, and is lowest when all members within the team hold a low level of power. Past research has operationalized team power by looking at the average control of resources held by members in a team within the broader company (Greer et al., 2011), as well as by looking at the average talent level, or control of expertise related assets of members in the team (Groysberg et al., 2011). A team's resource control can also come from the power bestowed on a team by the broader context which translates to its members (Greer et al., 2011; Mechanic, 1962). For example, a company may construct a task force which has the mandate to guide a change throughout the company. While the individual members in this team may come from all levels of the company, the power vested in this team to change the entire organization can give the team, and thereby its members, far-reaching power in the company. To illustrate, past research has looked at this type of power by having HR directors within a telecommunications company rate the power held by different members within the company (Greer et al., 2011). Team power-level, in both forms, is thus at its highest when all members within the team hold a high level of power, and is lowest when all members within the team hold a low level of power. Research has shown that teams are similarly impacted by both sources of team power — be it the average of individual member power or the team's possession of power in the broader organization (Greer, Caruso, & Jehn, 2011).

Team power-dispersion is defined as vertical differentiation in the amounts of resources controlled by different members within the team (Tarakci et al., 2016). A team's power dispersion is based on comparing the relative resource control of different members within the team, and past research has examined this by looking at the coefficient of variation or gini coefficient in salary (e.g., Bloom, 1999) or the presence of different ranks or control of organizational resources (e.g., Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017). Teams reach the highest power dispersion if power is concentrated within one person, whereas it reaches the lowest power dispersion if power is equally distributed among all team members (Harrison & Klein, 2007). For example, a team in which one member holds a substantially more influential job title than others would have high power dispersion, and a team in which all

[1] In our discussion, we return to the need for research to better understand and unpack how the different bases of power in teams may lead to potentially different behavioral dynamics and team outcomes.

members hold similarly valued job titles would have lower power dispersion.

The main behavioral process around power which has been studied in combination with such power structures in teams is intra-team power struggles. Power struggles are defined as the degree to which members compete over the relative levels of valuable resources controlled by members within the team (Greer & Van Kleef, 2010). Team power struggles reflect behavioral processes by which members may overtly or covertly try to change the structure of power in the team, including improving their own power positions or challenging the power positions of others (e.g., Wee, Liao, & Liu, 2017). Team power struggles have been assessed by surveys of team-members (e.g., Bendersky & Hays, 2012; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017) as well as via video-coding of team interactions (e.g., Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017). Teams have the highest levels of power struggles when all members are actively competing over power within the team, and teams have the lowest levels of power struggles when there is no competition over power within the team. For example, a team of business unit leaders could be said to have a high level of power struggles when all team members are competing against one another to procure monetary resources available to their team for their own individual purposes within their different business units. In contrast, a team in which power roles and positions haven't changed in years, and members feel comfortably freely sharing resources, such as time or money, with one another can be said to have a low level of power struggles.

A review of the research on power in teams

In this section, we review the empirical work that has been conducted on the team-level effects of team power-level, power dispersion, and power struggles.

Team power level

Team power has generally been proposed in the literature to have negative effects on team outcomes (e.g., Greer et al., 2011; Groysberg et al., 2011; Hildreth & Anderson, 2016). Teams where all members have high power, such as in management teams, are generally expected to have internal power struggles and conflicts, which harm team outcomes. These negative effects of team power have been theorized to occur because when members with high power interact, all members are motivated to retain and improve the power they hold (Bruins & Wilke, 1992; Mulder, 1977). As such members are vigilant to threats to their individual positions (e.g., Isen & Geva, 1987; Zhao & Greer, 2017). Additionally, given that high power members tend to be proactive and goal-oriented (Guinote, 2007; Keltner et al., 2003), high-power members are especially likely to lash out preemptively to protect and improve their positions (Halevy, 2016). In support of this, researchers have shown that high-power teams have more intragroup conflict in team studies in the laboratory (Hildreth & Anderson, 2016; Ronay et al., 2012) as well as in studies in the field of high-ranking corporate teams (Greer et al., 2011; Groysberg et al., 2011) and sports teams (Swaab et al., 2014). Indeed, early work on high-power teams found that high-power people often made hostile attributions of one another, presuming that the ambiguous behavior of high power others is malevolent (Rubin & Brown, 1975). More recently, Zhao and Greer (2017) found that when high-power people work together in teams, they often feel paranoid and anxious by the presence of other high-power peers, and therefore act in preemptively aggressive ways to protect their own sources of power. In sum, team power-level is expected in the literature to often drive negative intra-team power struggles and harm team performance.

In support of the above theorizing in the literature, team power level has indeed been largely shown to negatively impact team processes and outcomes (e.g., Brett et al., 1996; Chattopadhyay et al., 2010; Greer et al., 2011; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Groysberg et al., 2011; Hildreth & Anderson, 2016; Ronay, Greenaway, Anicich, & Galinsky, 2012; Swaab, Schaerer, Anicich, Ronay, & Galinsky, 2014; Zhao & Greer, 2017; for an exception, see Pinkley et al., 1994). In studies of within-team negotiations, when multiple members hold power within the team (through holding desirable alternatives or possessing formal power in the negotiation), teams are more likely to reach impasses (Brett et al., 1996) and to achieve lower joint outcomes (Greer & Van Kleef, 2010). In studies of student teams, teams where all members had high power performed worse on tasks in the laboratory than teams where all members had low power (e.g., Hildreth & Anderson, 2016; Ronay et al., 2012; Zhao & Greer, 2017). In the field context, work has shown that when organizational teams are populated with multiple high power-members of an organization, this can hurt the performance of teams in the financial industry (e.g., Greer et al., 2011; Groysberg et al., 2011; Swaab et al., 2014). For example, Groysberg et al. (2011) found teams with a high proportion of star financial analysts performed worse than teams with just a few stars. Similarly, Greer et al. (2011) found in both the telecom and financial sectors, that teams with on average many high-power members underperformed lower level teams in the company that had few or no high-power members.

Initial research has begun to look at potential moderators of these effects which can reduce the negative dynamics in high power teams. For example, Greer et al. (2011) found that when team members had on-going high consensus about positions within the team (i.e., greater agreement on the power distribution in the team), the negative effects of team power diminished. Similarly, Greer and Van Kleef (2010) found that when social comparison and associated threats to members' power within the team were reduced (by flattening internal team power hierarchies), the link between team power-level and performance-detracting power struggles was reduced. Both of these studies suggest that decreasing positional threats within high power teams can help high-power teams to get along better. In more recent work, Zhao and Greer (2017) explored another way to reduce perceived threats in high power teams – they asked teams to reduce attention to internal power dynamics. They found in a set

of laboratory studies as well as an archival study of management team shareholder letters that an external (as opposed to internal team) focus reduced power struggles and improved performance in high-power teams. Therefore, while team power-level appears to increase power struggles and harm team performance, contexts which can reduce (or at least reduce focus on) perceived personal resource threats can ameliorate the negative power dynamics within high-power teams.

Team power dispersion

Team power dispersion (i.e. intra-team hierarchy) has received the most attention in research thus far of any conceptualization of power in teams, and has been linked to divergent outcomes. Theory and research have proposed and shown both positive and negative effects of differences in power within a team on the outcomes of the team. On the one hand, theory and research on the conflict account of power suggest that team power dispersion negatively impacts team processes and outcomes (e.g., Bloom, 1999; Greer, De Jong et al., 2017; Greer, Van Kleef et al., 2017; Tarakci et al., 2016; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017). According to this theory, power dispersion elicits differences in perspectives and interests between members, as high-power members are motivated to protect their valued high-power positions, and low power members are motivated to reduce their vulnerabilities and move up the power hierarchy. These dynamics are likely to result in conflict, prevent team learning and information sharing, and reduce interpersonal helping, thereby harming team outcomes (Edmondson, 2002; Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Greer & Dannals, 2017; Siegel & Hambrick, 2005). To illustrate these dynamics, take for example a typical venture capital firm. In this firm, entry level associates may have important information on startup firms which they have analyzed, but may have to fight to be heard in firm investment meetings where more powerful senior partners tend to wield the most influence and make decisions based on their own personal preferences. In such situations, where power defines team interactions, teams may struggle to perform. In the scenario mentioned, such power dynamics could likely result in the venture firm missing out on an important investment opportunity.

In support of the conflict account, many studies have found negative effects of power dispersion on team outcomes (e.g., Edmondson, 2002; Torrance, 1955; Tost et al., 2013; Van der Vegt, De Jong, Bunderson, & Molleman, 2010), and conflict has been frequently shown to mediate this effect (e.g., Bunderson, Van der Vegt, Cantimur, & Rink, 2016; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017). In sports teams, teams with more unequal pay performed worse on the field (e.g., winning percentage) (Bloom, 1999; Jewell & Molina, 2004; Richards & Guell, 1998). Similarly, in management teams, unequal pay has been linked to poorer firm performance (e.g., Patel & Cooper, 2014; Rulke & Galaskiewicz, 2000). For example, Siegel and Hambrick (2005) examined 67 top management teams of U.S. firms, and found executive compensation dispersion was negatively related to firm performance (market-to-book and total shareholder return) for more technologically intensive firms. The researchers' reasoning is that especially in technologically intensive firms, multiway information processing and collaboration between senior executives are required, which are impeded by having high levels of pay inequity in the team. In organizational settings, across all levels of the organization, research has also generally found a negative effect of power dispersion on team performance (e.g., Bloom, 1999; Sauer & Kauffeld, 2013; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017). For example, Wellman (2013), Mitchell et al. (2015), and Perry (2014) all found that perceived dispersion in referent power, or status, decreased the performance of healthcare teams. In the context of negotiating teams, several studies have shown power dispersion to create more competitive and conflictual interactions and to impair team performance outcomes (e.g., Giebels, Van der Vliet, 2000; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Mannix, 1993; Mannix & Neale, 1993; Wolfe & McGinn, 2005). For example, Van Bunderen, Greer et al. (2017) and Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al. (2017) found that teams with a formal power hierarchy (as opposed to flat power structure) had more power struggles and lower joint outcomes during within-team negotiations, especially when team resources were threatened by conflicts in the broader organization. In studies of student groups, power dispersion, such as seen in differences in dominance, sense of power, and in the presence or absence of formal leaders, reduced team open communication and member satisfaction and consequently diminished team performance (e.g., Becker & Baloff, 1969; Curşeu & Sari, 2015; Curseu & Sau, 2013; Haslam et al., 1998; Maner & Mead, 2010; Tost et al., 2013). For example, Carson, Tesluk, and Marrone (2007) found that higher levels of power dispersion, in the form of more centralized leadership (vs shared leadership), hurt the performance of student consulting teams.

On the other hand, the functionalist account suggests that power dispersion is associated with potential positive outcomes (e.g., Anderson, Srivastava, Beer, Spataro, & Chatman, 2006; Keltner, Van Kleef, Chen, & Kraus, 2008; Van Vugt, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2008). First, this perspective is rooted in research in social psychology, which suggests that an unconscious preference for hierarchy exists (Tiedens & Fragale, 2003) because of the comfort it gives in prioritizing and clarifying information and interactions (Halevy et al., 2011; Zitek & Tiedens, 2012). Such clarity can satisfy individuals' fundamental needs for structure, predictability, and certainty (Fromm, 1941; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Whitson & Galinsky, 2008). Second, power dispersion satisfies individuals' needs for power and achievement (Schwartz, 1992) and provides an effective incentive structure for people motivated to move up the ranks in a power hierarchy. By enabling promotion, differentiated compensation, and intangible status symbols (e.g., job titles), power dispersion in teams serves as a formal reward structure motivating individual members to excel at work and engage in extra-role behaviors (Halevy et al., 2011; Gruenfeld & Tiedens, 2010). Third, power dispersion is thought to increase role clarity, which

facilitates the division of labor, smooths interpersonal interactions, and enhances coordination (e.g., De Kwaadsteniet, Van Dijk, Wit, De Cremer, & De Rooij, 2007; Halevy et al., 2011; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Woolley et al., 2008). Finally, the functional account of power dispersion suggests that power differentiations should reduce conflict and promote cooperation between ranks, because lower-ranked members comply with and defer to higher-ranked ones so as to maximize their short- and long-term interests (De Waal, 1989; Fiske, 2010). Taken together, functionalist accounts expect power dispersion to benefit team outcomes.

In support of the functional perspective, some studies have shown positive effects of power dispersion on team outcomes. Power dispersion in management teams (such as via executive compensation dispersion or dispersion in decision making influence) has been found to be positively related to firm performance (e.g., Boone & Hendriks, 2009; He & Huang, 2011). For instance, Main, O'Reilly, and Wade (1993) examined 209 top management teams of public firms over five years and found executive team wage dispersion to be positively related to return on assets. In certain sport teams (e.g., NBA, NHL), power dispersion (based on salary or talent level) has also been found to enhance the likelihood of winning due to improved cooperation and coordination (Halevy et al., 2012; Frick et al., 2003; Trzebiatowski & Trevor, 2016; Stuart, 2011). In such teams having a key player, rather than multiple stars, may help alleviate ego conflicts and team failures (e.g., Groysberg et al., 2011; Swaab et al., 2014). Similarly, in some negotiation studies, power dispersion has been shown to benefit team outcomes (e.g., Brett et al., 1996; Pinkley et al., 1994). For example, Sondak and Bazerman (1991) found that unequal power between negotiation partners in terms of the parties' different potential outside alternatives (i.e. one party has a great exit option, and the other didn't) increased the quality of negotiated agreements. And in studies of student teams, power dispersion also has been shown to benefit team performance (e.g., Ronay et al., 2012), particularly when based on expertise (e.g., Martins, Schilpzand, Kirkman, Ivanaj, & Ivanaj, 2013; Tarakci et al., 2016; Woolley et al., 2008). For example, Woolley et al. (2008) found that teams which had high power dispersion in the form of a clear expertise hierarchy better integrated information and were therefore better at solving a hypothetical terrorist plot.

In an effort to reconcile these two accounts (conflict and functional perspectives) and to summarize the state of the literature, Greer, De Jong et al. (2017), and Greer, Van Kleef et al. (2017) recently conducted a meta-analysis across 54 studies (including 13,914 teams). They found that the average main effect of power dispersion on team performance and satisfaction across the studies included was negative. They empirically demonstrated that this negative effect was explained by heightened conflicts within power-dispersed teams, and did not find any support for positive effects of power dispersion on performance via coordination processes in power-dispersed teams. The authors suggested that their findings showed stronger support for conflict than functionalist accounts of power dispersion at this point in the literature. They also raised the possibility that past functionalist assumptions on the benefits of power dispersion, or hierarchy for teams, may have been overgeneralized from findings which were theoretical or measured individual level outcomes rather than team performance outcomes (e.g., Halevy et al., 2011; Tiedens & Fragale, 2003; Zitek & Tiedens, 2012). They therefore suggested that the literature needs to pay more attention to developing a deeper understanding of how and why power dispersion may have a more negative effect on team outcomes via conflicts in the team. However, they also showed that these effects are sensitive to the context, with the negative effects of power dispersion being weakened in teams where conflicts are unlikely (i.e. homogenous teams with stable membership and stable hierarchies), and positive effects of power dispersion being possible when the power differences are clearly expertise based and when tasks require an especially high amount of coordination (i.e. virtual teams, or teams where the hierarchy is clearly expertise based).

Others have also begun to attempt to reconcile these divergent findings on the effects of team power dispersion. Different theoretical moderating models have been put forward (e.g., Anderson & Willer, 2014; Greer, De Jong et al., 2017; Greer, Van Kleef et al., 2017), and numerous empirical studies have begun to test contingencies which may determine whether power dispersion is good or bad for team outcomes (e.g., the shape of the hierarchy Bunderson et al., 2016; interdependence, Ronay et al., 2012). For instance, Tarakci et al. (2016) found that performance differences between teams with high and low power disparity are contingent on whether the power holder has high or low competence. Power dispersion benefits team performance when it is aligned with power holder's task competence, but harms team performance when it is not aligned with task competence. In another example, Van der Vegt et al. (2010) examined 46 teams in the field and found that power dispersion was positively related to learning and performance when teams received team feedback, but negatively related to learning and performance when teams received individual feedback. This is because team feedback promotes a collective improvement orientation within a team (i.e., how are we doing; what can we do to improve our performance?), which leads high power members to use their power advantage to help the team. Individual feedback on the other hand promotes an individual improvement orientation (i.e., how am I doing; what can I do to improve my performance?), leading high power members to use their power advantage solely for their own gain (Van der Vegt et al., 2010). Relatedly, both Bunderson (2003) and Greer, De Jong et al. (2017), and Greer, Van Kleef et al. (2017) show that power differences are more negatively related to performance in teams where there are functional differences and conflict susceptibilities. And closely tied to these findings, Van Bunderen, Greer et al. (2017) and Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al. (2017) show that external conflicts may also lead power differences to be more strongly related to performance-detracting intra-team power struggles. Together, the body of work on power dispersion suggests that power dispersion can often cause performance-detracting power struggles in teams.

Power struggles in teams

The primary behavioral process around power in teams which has been examined in the literature is intra-team power struggles. Power struggles can involve competition for formal resource control as well as for more informal control, such as esteem in the eyes of others [indeed, some research has specifically focused on such status conflicts (e.g., Bendersky & Hays, 2012; Owens et al., 2001; Sonenshein, Nault, & Obodaru, 2017; Sutton & Hargadon, 1996; for reviews, see Bendersky & Pai, 2018; Greer & Dannals, 2017)]. Intra-team power struggles are different from other known forms of intra-team conflicts in their underlying driver — power struggles occur because of a desire to change the relative levels of resource allocations in the team (Greer & Van Kleef, 2010). At times, power struggles are overt, and can be explicitly seen as such. At other times, power struggles may be expressed more indirectly and instead may be seen in how they drive other forms of conflict in teams, such as conflicts over the task (i.e., disagreements about the goals and outcomes of teamwork),[2] relationship (i.e., personality or value clashes), and process (i.e., disagreements about team logistics, such as meeting time) (Greer, Caruso, & Jehn, 2011; Jehn, 1995). This is because other types of conflicts are oftentimes seen as less threatening, and therefore are more accepted and more normative to express than power struggles (Greer et al., 2011), which are mostly condemned. Indeed, research has shown that trying to overstep or improve one's resource control is punished in teams (Anderson et al., 2006). Therefore, rather than openly express such counter-normative goals, members may instead use other forms of conflicts as opportunities to gain power. For example, a member may propose a new process to guide work on a specific task in order to gain prestige in the eyes of others or control over a more desirable role within the team. As another example of a hidden power struggle, during such a task conflict, a member who is afraid of losing power may start to heavily criticize a proposal, not because he does not agree with this new way of working, but because he is afraid that by accepting this proposal, the other member may gain power, and he might lose power. As such, members may frequently use other forms of conflicts to express their underlying power struggles.

Power struggles encompass a large variety of behaviors (Greer & Van Kleef, 2010). In order to gain more power, members may both try to put or pull others down or to bring oneself up (cf., Cheng, Tracy, Foulsham, Kingstone, & Henrich, 2013; De Laat, 1994; Wee et al., 2017), and they may do so in more overt – out in the open for everyone to see and experience – or more covert – hidden, more secretly executed – manners. For instance, members may struggle for power by engaging in behind-the-scenes coalition formation, purposely withholding information from each other (e.g., Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988), or gossiping about one another (e.g., Beersma & Van Kleef, 2012). Members may also in their power-quest deceive, manipulate or undermine authority — for instance by explicitly refusing orders or more implicitly ignoring orders (De Laat, 1994). They can also try to augment their power by dominating, coercing or sabotaging other members (Greer & Van Kleef, 2010). Members can also try to improve their power position by increasing one's effort and achievement, bragging about their achievements, or taking credit for other members' work (Rudman, 1998).

Power struggle behaviors may not only manifest in many different ways, but they may also be portrayed by members in all directions. That is, power struggle behaviors may be directed upward from lower ranked members to higher ranked members, in order to either bring higher ranked members down, oneself up or both. For instance, lower ranked members may rally up together against higher ranked members (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988). Lower ranked members may also make power moves by withholding access to persons, information or instrumentalities (Mechanic, 1962), or by making high-ranked members more dependent on the lower-ranked members (Wee et al., 2017). For example, the secretary who is generally in charge of the allocation of office supplies and space may use this power to purposely disadvantage higher ranked colleagues. Power struggle behaviors may also come from higher ranked members directed at lower ranked members – especially when they feel threatened – in order to protect or improve their own power positions (Maner & Mead, 2010). Indeed, it is not uncommon for high power members, like the CEO's of top management teams, to be suspicious, distrusting, and worried that other team members are plotting against him or her (i.e., be paranoid; see Kramer, 2001). Therefore, higher ranked members may, for instance, oppress or sideline lower ranked members. Lastly, power struggle behaviors may also be directed laterally, i.e., members of the same power rank may also compete with one another (Van Dijke & Poppe, 2006; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017) for instance by discrediting each other.

Power struggles have been nearly entirely proposed to have a negative impact on team outcomes. First, power struggles are notoriously difficult to clearly identify and resolve, as they are often indirectly expressed via other behaviors, such as pushing more aggressively during a task conflict or claiming a desirable role during a process discussion (Greer & Dannals, 2017). Conflicts can only ever help performance when the real issues are brought to the table and discussed. However, power tends to be a very sensitive topic, which people find it difficult to openly talk about, and therefore power struggles are rarely openly discussed in teams, making their eventual resolution very problematic and their chance of escalating likely (Greer et al., 2011). Second, power struggles make members primarily concerned with their own power position, and as such distracts them from their task and team activities (cf. De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; De Wit et al., 2012; Jehn, 1995). Third, power struggles are likely to sour personal

[2] This could at times lead to an improvement of performance, as task conflicts may benefit team performance (De Wit, Greer, & Jehn, 2012). However, in situations where task conflicts are used as an implicit way to fight over power, its beneficial effects may be minimal.

relationships between members (Mannix & Sauer, 2006), which impacts other important pre-requisites of team functioning and performance, including intra-team trust (De Jong & Elfring, 2010) and the willingness to share information and cooperate with one another (e.g., Greer & Van Kleef, 2010). Fourth, because power is often seen as zero-sum, when one member seeks power, this can be threatening for other team members (e.g., Anderson & Brion, 2014; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). As a result, they may seek to protect or bolster their own position in response to perceived power moves by others (e.g., Fast & Chen, 2009; Georgesen & Harris, 2006; Halevy, 2016; Maner & Mead, 2010; Morrison, Fast, & Ybarra, 2009; Pettit, Yong, & Spataro, 2010). This, together with the fact that changes in the intra-team power distribution affect all members of the team, makes power struggles likely to be contagious within teams (Jehn, Rispens, Jonsen, & Greer, 2013). As such, the implications of power struggles tend to be long-term and intractable (e.g., Kapferer, 1969; Ridgeway & Walker, 1995), thereby harming effective teamwork.

In support of the above theorizing, research thus far does show that power struggles are likely to negatively affect team outcomes (e.g., Bendersky & Hays, 2012; De Hoogh et al., 2015; Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Greer, De Jong et al., 2017; Greer, Van Kleef et al., 2017; Hildreth & Anderson, 2016; Spoelma & Ellis, 2017; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017). For example, Greer and Van Kleef (2010) video-coded power struggles in both student negotiation-dyads as well as real work teams performing an information-sharing exercise, and found power struggles to impede intra-team conflict resolution. Power struggles have also been found to impair team decision-making quality (Spoelma & Ellis, 2017). For instance, Spoelma and Ellis (2017) let 90 four-person student teams conduct a distributed information team decision-making task in which students needed to discuss and then decide which of the described university professors would be the most qualified candidate for an endowed chair position. Teams that showed more power struggles made poorer team decisions. Last, power struggles have been found to harm team performance (Bendersky & Hays, 2012; Hildreth & Anderson, 2016; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017; Yu & Greer, 2017). As an example, Greer, Van Kleef et al. (2017) found in their study with retail outlet teams that higher levels of self-reported power struggles were negatively related to the financial performance of the team – as measured by the number of sales divided by the number of customers walking into the retail outlet per day. In sum, at this point in the literature, findings have nearly universally shown that power struggles negatively affect team outcomes.

Given the potentially devastating effects of power struggles for team outcomes, research has begun to examine how such power struggles can be prevented or managed (e.g., Carton & Tewfik, 2016). For example, Lee, Choi, and Kim (2017) showed in a multi-method set of studies that gender diversity can ameliorate the negative effects of status conflicts in teams. De Hoogh et al. (2015) showed that the deleterious effects of power struggles for team performance are ameliorated when leaders exhibit less autocratic tendencies. And, Bendersky and Hays (2017) showed that in teams with initial high disagreement about ranks, power struggles about such ranks can actually lead to subsequent higher agreement on internal team hierarchies, highlighting a situation in which power struggles could even potentially benefit team outcomes.

Contrasting findings on power at the individual vs. team level

From our review of the existing literature on power in teams, several key conclusions emerge. First, team power-level seems to exert a generally negative effect on team outcomes, which is largely driven by increased (power) struggles within the team (e.g., Greer et al., 2011; Hildreth & Anderson, 2016). Second, team power-dispersion also seems to exert a negative effect on team outcomes, again via team power struggles, but these effects do seem to be more contextually dependent (for a recent meta-analysis, see Greer, De Jong et al., 2017; Greer, Van Kleef et al., 2017). Third, team power struggles — disagreements and competition of the control of resources in the team, also seem to negatively impact team outcomes (e.g., Bendersky & Hays, 2012; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017). These conclusions offer relatively dark implications about the effects of power when conceptualized and analyzed at the team-level of analysis.

Interestingly, these findings stand in contrast to the generally rosy view of the effects of power when operationalized at the individual level of analysis (for broader reviews on this topic, see Fiske & Berdahl, 2007; Galinsky et al., 2012; Guinote, 2007; Keltner et al., 2003, 2008; we focus here on comparing the highlights from these reviews with those from our review of power at the team-level of analysis). At the individual level, having high power in one area, such as the rank, can lead to a host of benefits and accrual of other resources, such as higher decision-making authority, monetary benefits, organizational ranks and promotions, prestige, recognition, control, agency, independence, and well-being (e.g., Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000; Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch 1980; Davis & Moore 1945; Kipnis 1972; Van Dijke & Poppe, 2006). Additionally, power at the individual level has also been shown to increase the actual capabilities and performance of power holders, increasing approach orientation, executive functioning, goal orientation, creativity, and task performance (e.g., Keltner et al., 2003; Guinote, 2007; Smith et al., 2008; Smith & Trope, 2006). Finally, power has even been shown to promote individual well-being, including affect, life satisfaction (Anderson et al., 2012; Kifer et al., 2013), and reduced stress (Sherman, Lee, Cuddy, Renshon, Oveis, Gross, & Lerner, 2012). These benefits stand in contrast to what the emerging research on power at the team level is showing — when at least one high-power member is present within a team (as is the case in both high power-level and high power-dispersed teams), the team as a whole tends to suffer (Greer et al., 2011; Greer, De Jong et al., 2017; Greer,

Van Kleef et al., 2017), with team performance and satisfaction being lower and turnover higher.

Given this large disconnect between what happens when power is conceptualized at the individual versus team-level of analysis, a stronger theory at the team-level of analysis is needed to explain why the benefits of power at the individual level can lead power at the team-level to harm team outcomes. We present an emergent, inductive theory, based on our review of the burgeoning literature in this area below.

An emergent theory of power in teams

Our review of the literature on power in teams suggests that power can have deleterious consequences for team outcomes. Here we develop an emergent conflict account of power in which we explain why and when power can corrode team outcomes (for an overview of our theoretical model, please see Fig. 1). In this theory, we focus on the two most commonly examined conceptualizations of power at the team-level — team power-level, or the average level of power of members in the team, and team power dispersion, or the dispersion of organizational power within the team. We build on and extend individual-level findings by translating them to the team-level of analysis, theorizing that power can be harmful at the team-level paradoxically because it is so advantageous at the individual level. We then identify contexts most likely to elicit the negative effects of power (namely, settings where teams face external or internal threats to resources), and suggest that in other contexts (when such threats are absent), the negative effects of power will remain inactive. In such settings, power could help teams achieve better outcomes, and we call for future research to unpack the why and when of the benefits of power in a way similar to how we unpack the dark side of power in the model presented here.

Team power structures which foster power sensitivity

We propose that in teams that have at least one high power member, such as in high power teams and teams with high power dispersion, teams will be collectively more sensitive to power. With power sensitivity, we posit that members are excessively perceptive of, affected by, and responsive to resources in the team. This could mean that members categorize themselves and others in the team on the basis of resource possession, define themselves in terms of their power roles, and are vigilant for changes in resource control within the team which could affect their own power levels. For example, when teams are power-sensitized by the presence of at least one high-power member, intra-team tensions may easily arise when one member gets promoted to a more senior role on a project or even when a member gets a new laptop or other new equipment.

We theorize that members of high power teams and high power dispersed teams are power sensitive because when at least one member in the team has high power, the inherent benefits of possessing power (and the disadvantages of not possessing power) become salient to all members of the team (e.g., Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Mulder, 1977). As mentioned, possessing high power provides members with both material and psychological benefits, such as greater decision-making authority, higher salary, promotion, prestige, recognition, control, agency, independence, and well-being (e.g., Adler et al., 2000; Berger et al., 1980; Davis & Moore 1945; Kipnis 1972; Van Dijke & Poppe, 2006). Therefore, in teams with structures that signal these benefits (by having at least one high

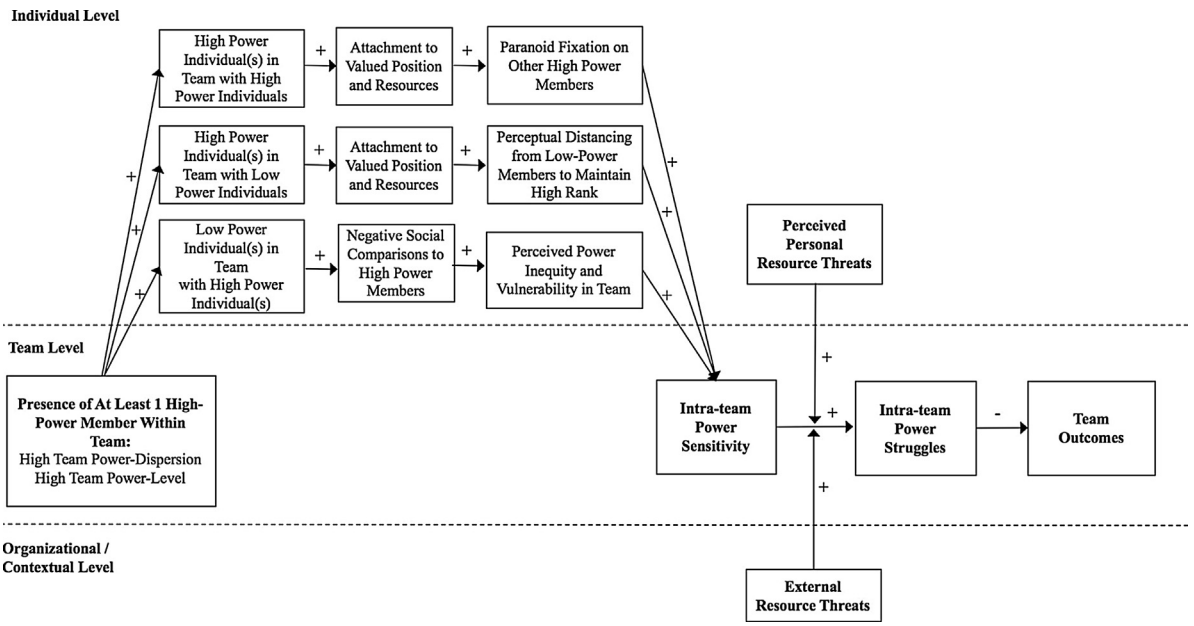

Fig. 1. The conflict account of power dynamics in teams.

power member, i.e., high power teams and high power dispersed teams), all members are sensitive to power. Those members who have power value their powerful position (e.g., Chang, Chow, & Woolley, 2017) and are thus afraid to lose it (Mulder, 1977). And, any other members that do not have power feel vulnerable in their powerless position and are thus eager to obtain power (Magee & Galinsky, 2008).

We draw on social comparison theory (e.g., Festinger, 1954; Rijsman, 1983) and its derivatives, such as competition theory (Garcia, Tor, & Schiff, 2013), to explain how the members of both high power-level and high power-dispersed teams develop power sensitivity. Social comparison theory (e.g., Festinger, 1954; Rijsman,1983) postulates that people have the tendency to self-evaluate by comparing themselves to others on the dimensions that are important to them. Based on such social comparisons, people consequently become concerned with achieving and maintaining a superior position on such dimensions. We argue that especially in teams where at least one member has power, power becomes an important comparison dimension for members, thereby fostering members to continuously compare their power position in the team with that of other members. These social comparison processes around power in turn, are expected to make members very sensitive to the intra-team distribution of resources more generally, and their own power position within the team more specifically.

We now discuss how each individual power role within both high power-level and high power-dispersed teams can lead to team-level power sensitivities via social comparison. First, in high power-level teams, all members have high power, and therefore greatly value power (e.g., Chang et al., 2017; Mulder, 1977) and are highly vigilant in seeking to retain their power. When the other members in the team also have high-power, this can be threatening for high-power members, as other high-power members can be expected to be power-hungry (as well) and quick to lash out (Keltner et al., 2003). This can lead members to be paranoid — a common occurrence in organizations, where members experience a heightened and exaggerated state of distrust and suspicion (Kramer, 2001). Indeed, paranoia is most likely to emerge in situations with high social uncertainty (Zimbardo, Andersen, & Kabat, 1981). Such uncertainty exists when multiple high-power members interact, as other members worry about their standing vis-à-vis their high-power teammates, who value power as much as themselves and are likely to act to protect and promote their own individual power positions (Greer et al., 2011). This can lead members of high-power teams to be highly sensitive, or reactive, to any mention of power in the team. Indeed, Spataro, Petit, Sauer, and Lount (2014) found that high-power peers are extremely sensitive to each other's behavior.

In high power-dispersed teams, teams are also likely to be sensitive to power, albeit for slightly different reasons. In high-power teams, two key power roles exist — high power individuals and low(er) power individuals. High power individuals working with low power individuals may not have the same level of paranoia as those working with other high power individuals, but they will still exhibit the hallmark tendencies of powerful individuals. This means that high power individuals working in teams with low power individuals (i.e., high power members in high power dispersed teams) call the shots in the team, and are therefore in a very privileged position (Dwyer & Walker, 1981; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). They receive, for instance, higher decision-making authority, and more control and recognition (e.g., Adler et al., 2000; Berger et al., 1980; Davis & Moore 1945; Kipnis 1972; Sturm & Antonakis, 2015; Van Dijke & Poppe, 2006). Although high power individuals make pleasurable downward social comparisons in their teams (as they hold the more favorable position), the downside is that such favorable comparisons amplify the perception of one's valued position, and makes one even more afraid to lose it (Mulder, 1977). Indeed, an abundance of research shows that high power individuals are easily threatened in their position (Fast & Chen, 2009; Georgesen & Harris, 2006; Halevy, 2016; Maner & Mead, 2010; Mead & Maner, 2012; Pettit et al., 2010). Therefore, high power individuals tend to be cautious of lower power individuals (e.g., Inesi, Gruenfeld, & Galinsky, 2012; Maner & Mead, 2010), and try to keep them at a distance (Fiske, 2010; Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, & Otten, 2008; Magee & Smith, 2013). This makes high power individuals in power-dispersed teams quite sensitive to power and quick to react on any potential perceived power dynamics in their teams.

Low(er) power individuals working in teams with high power individuals (i.e., low power individuals in high power dispersed teams) have little to no decision authority within the team, and are therefore in an underprivileged and vulnerable position (Dwyer & Walker, 1981; Magee & Galinksy, 2008). While researchers have argued that low power individuals tend to justify the power dispersed system that they are part of, and as such do not necessarily rebel against it (De Cremer & Tyler, 2005; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sidanius, 1993; Sidanius et al., 1991), this does not mean that low power individuals are unaware of or happy with their deprived position in the team (Martorana, Galinsky, & Rao, 2005; Tjosvold, 1981). Indeed, low power individuals do socially compare their power position with that of other members, which can result in painful upward social comparisons (Collins, 1996; Festinger, 1954; Rijsman, 1983), that reminds them of all the benefits they lack and the vulnerable position they are in (Keltner et al., 2003; Kramer, 1996; Solomon, 1960; Tjosvold, 1981). Indeed, low power individuals are dependent on high power individuals for their rewards and punishments (Emerson, 1962; Magee & Galinsky, 2008), and high-power individuals may decide to use this power to their own advantage, thereby neglecting or even mistreating low power individuals (Maner & Mead, 2010). As a result, low power individuals in power-dispersed teams are likely to make upward social comparisons, due to the benefits they see that high power individuals have in the team, making them very cognizant of the inequity of their team's power structure and their vulnerability within it. Therefore, in power-dispersed teams, all members – the lone high-power member or the other low power members – are sensitive to power, albeit for different reasons, and this

leads the team as a whole to have a high level of power sensitivity.

Accordingly, we propose that in team structures where at least one member has power (thus teams with high-power level or high-power dispersion), teams become sensitized to the topic of power via a process of social comparison:

Proposition 1. *Team power structures which have at least one high power member (i.e. high-power teams, where all members have high power, or teams with high power-dispersion, where the person at the top holds high power) will have increased intra-team power sensitivity compared to teams without high-power members (i.e. egalitarian and/or low-power teams).*

When and why power sensitivity elicits power struggles

Power sensitivity of members in high power teams and teams with high power dispersion may elicit team power struggles, as members that are excessively perceptive of, affected by, and responsive to the distribution of resources in the team are more prone to try to protect or improve their own power position in the team. However, we argue that this link between power sensitivity and power struggles is largely contextual. In other words, being sensitive to power does not necessarily mean that members will struggle for power. In this conflict account of power in teams, we theorize that only in situations where members' resources are perceived to be threatened (either due to internal team factors or due to external team factors), power sensitivity will translate into power struggles. When such threats are absent, teams will remain sensitive to power, but this will not impair their interactions or outcomes. In such settings, power could even be used to benefit teams. We focus here on unpacking exactly why and when power could harm teams in such situations, and call for future research to extend our research to understand how once the downsides of power are turned off, the benefits of power for team outcomes can be achieved.

Internal team threats

We postulate that internal team factors that create a perceived threat to members' (personal) resources make members more likely to act out on their power sensitivity. Namely, internal team threats implicitly threaten members' power position, and thereby encourage power-sensitized teams to engage in power struggles. Internal factors that create threats to members' resources are aspects of the internal team environment which make power in the team unstable and therefore more easily contested. Such factors can include great power inequities within the team (e.g., Bunderson, 2003; Pitcher & Smith, 2001), illegitimate power dispersions (e.g., Martorana et al.. 2005), easily mutable power dispersions (e.g., Hays & Bendersky, 2015), and factionalization within the team (e.g., Golden & Zajac, 2001). All of these factors make members of high power-level and high power-dispersed teams concerned about their personal resource control and power position, and thereby provoke members of power-sensitive teams to fight for their own position, triggering team outcome-detracting internal power struggles.

When power sensitive teams have great perceived inequities, they are more likely to get embroiled in power struggles. Inequity is inherent to power dispersion. However, the degree of inequity may vary in power-dispersed teams (e.g., Bunderson et al., 2016; Harrison & Klein, 2007). Power dispersion can be greater or smaller, meaning that there are more or less inequities between members. The larger the inequities between members (i.e., the greater the power dispersion), and the more unequally resources are distributed, the more likely members will engage in power struggles. That is, lower ranked members may consider the power distribution to be unfair, and may start to revolt (e.g., Martorana et al., 2005). Higher ranked members may also be extra afraid to lose their powerful position (i.e., the more you have, the more you can lose), and may start to actively defend their position. Support for this idea comes from research on management teams, which shows that more inequitable distributions of power increase political behaviors (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988) and power struggles (Greer & Van Kleef, 2010). Related research also shows that when inequity is highlighted in the layout of how passengers board airplanes (they have to walk by first class seats to get to economy seats), conflict is more likely (i.e., air rage incidents) (DeCelles & Norton, 2016). Finally, the Arab Spring also illustrates how great inequities may lead to power struggles. In the countries of the Arab Spring, inequity had become extreme – dictators had all the power and the people had none. Such extreme inequity provoked the people into rising up and deposing (or trying to depose) their leaders in a violent way. Therefore, great inequities are expected to amplify the relationship between intra-team power sensitivity and power struggles.

Illegitimate power dispersions are also more likely to become contested (e.g., Lammers et al., 2008; Martorana et al., 2005). Power dispersions can be perceived as illegitimate, or based on reasons which are unfair or undeserving, due to several reasons. One reason could be that the process through which power positions are obtained is seen as unreasonable or unfair (e.g., high rank is obtained due to nepotism rather than meritocracy or democracy). Another reason may be that the criteria on which the power dispersion is based are seen as fraudulent (e.g., the power dispersion is dominance rather than competence based). Last, the norms, rules, and parameters that regulate the ongoing stability of power dispersion may be viewed as incorrectly, illegally, or unfairly established (Martorana et al., 2005; Rosette & Thompson, 2005). When power dispersion is perceived as illegitimate, this tends to lead lower ranked members to rebel against the current distribution of power (Lammers et al., 2008). Support for this comes from the organizational justice literature which shows that perceptions of organizational injustice are positively associated with a wide variety of protests (Leung, Chiu, & Au, 1993). Illegitimacy may also promote dominant and competitive behaviors from higher ranked members, who perceive their powerful position to be less secure and hence try to acquire more power to strengthen

their position (e.g., Anicich, Fast, Halevy, & Galinsky, 2015; Fast et al., 2012). As such, power illegitimacy encourages members to try to change the current power structure, and thus to act on the power sensitivity within the team.

When power positions are mutable, i.e., the power dispersion is less rigid and stable, competitions over power between members are more common (e.g., Greer, De Jong et al., 2017; Greer, Van Kleef et al., 2017; Hays & Bendersky, 2015). When there is greater mutability in a power distribution, there is greater opportunity for upward mobility, which motivates members to compete over power, as they hope to advance in the hierarchy (Hays & Bendersky, 2015). Greater mobility does not only motivate lower ranked members to try to promote their rank, it also motivates higher ranked members to protect their rank, as they may feel threatened in their position. Indeed, in power dispersions that are less stable, higher ranked members are known to act in self-serving manners, and at times even to pre-emptively strike, in order to safeguard their own position (Maner & Mead, 2010). This suggests that when power is salient and positions are mutable, members will be focused on promoting and protecting their own individual position in the team. Therefore, in teams with high position mutability, power sensitivity is more likely to result into intra-team power struggles.

When teams are more factionalized, the relationship between power sensitivity and power struggles is also expected to become stronger. Teams become factionalized when members put themselves and each other into social categories, rather than seeing each other as individuals. In start-up teams, early stage founders often struggle to keep sales people and engineers from factionalizing into subgroups that compete with each other. When teams become factionalized, the threats posed by us-versus-them conflicts within the team may spark underlying power sensitivities, leading power differences to ignite turf wars between the factional groups. For example, Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988) found that when team power dispersions are prone to inequality or factionalization, members are more likely to engage in intragroup politics. Similarly, Zahra and Pearce (1989) suggested that power factionalization among high-power board members heightens disagreement and fighting.

However, when internal resource threats are absent, members are less likely to act on their power sensitivity. For example, when the distribution of power is more equitable, members are less likely to engage in political activities in order to expand their own resource control (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988). And work by Anderson and colleagues has shown that people, in legitimate power dispersions, are careful to not overstep their position, as such oversteps can be heavily punished by their team members (Anderson, Ames, & Gosling, 2008; Anderson et al., 2006). Moreover, when members' power moves in teams are seen as legitimate, the upcoming power transitions within the team tend to take place smoothly and eventually benefit team effectiveness (Aime, Humphrey, DeRue, & Paul, 2014). Therefore, we propose that power-sensitized teams (i.e. high-power teams and teams with high power-dispersion) will only have team outcome-detracting power struggles when teams experience internal threats to member resources. When threats are absent, power sensitivities will not lead to downstream negative consequences for teams.

Proposition 2. *When members in teams perceive personal resource threats within the team, such as from perceiving positions in the team as inequitable, illegitimate, mutable, or factionalized, power sensitivity will increase intra-team power struggles.*

External team threats

We further argue that external team factors that pose a threat to teams' perceived levels of resources will also increase the likelihood that team power-sensitivity provokes power struggles. This is because external factors that form threats to team resources indirectly also threaten members' personal resources, as members receive their personal resources from the team's resource pool (e.g., Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017). External threats to team resources could include intergroup conflict (e.g., Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017), environmental uncertainty (e.g., Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988), and organizational change (e.g., Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017; Greer, De Jong et al., 2017; Greer, Van Kleef et al., 2017). We propose that members of high power teams and teams with high power dispersion, due to their power sensitivity, will be mainly concerned about the individual-level implications of the resource threat (and thus how this resource threat translates to their own power position) and fear that other members will do the same (Aquino & Reed, 1998; Mannix, 1993; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017). That is, power sensitive members are vigilant for changes in resource control within the team, and when resources are threatened, a change in resource distribution become more probable. Therefore, when resource threats occur for power-sensitized teams, members are likely to experience this as a threat to their own power position, and power struggles will ensue.

When power sensitized teams get involved in intergroup conflicts, power struggles are a likely consequence. Intergroup conflicts between teams are common occurrences in organizations, as teams are mutually dependent on the same valuable but finite organizational resource pool (e.g., Baldridge & Riley, 1977; Kramer, 1991; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1977; Pondy, 1967). For instance, teams may come into conflict with each other about the allocation of resources, such as budget or personnel (e.g., Baldridge & Riley, 1977; Kramer, 1991; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1977; Pondy, 1967). Intergroup conflicts inherently pose a threat to a team's own internal resources, as these conflicts may result in teams losing out on desired resources. But also, teams need to expend time and energy towards battling the conflicting team, which means that team resources cannot directly be converted into team tasks. This press on team resources also threatens members' individual resource shares, which will stimulate power sensitive members to seek to protect their own individual resource share and power position (cf. Kerr, 1983; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al.,

2017). Support for this notion comes from a multi-method study by Van Bunderen, Greer et al. (2017) and Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al. (2017). They showed, with both ongoing teams in a health insurance organization and student negotiation teams, that resource threatening intergroup conflicts increased power struggles in teams with high power dispersion, but reduced intra-team power struggles in teams with low power dispersion (thereby supporting the general assumption that resource threats in general, and intergroup conflict specifically, may have cohesive effects on teams with low power dispersed structures; Brewer, 2001; Campbell, 1965; Staw et al., 1981; Stein, 1976; Tajfel, 1982).

When power-sensitized teams operate in volatile, high uncertainty environments, power struggles are also a likely result. In volatile, high uncertainty environments, it is difficult for members to predict what the future will bring, creating uncertainty about the future resource supply for the team (Duncan, 1972; Milliken, 1987). While resources may not currently be scarce for these teams, the fact that this can change at any moment makes members worried about and focused on team resources. We expect that this anxiety translates for power sensitive members into a concern about their own personal resource share and hence their power position, increasing the likelihood of power struggles in such situations. In support of this reasoning, a qualitative study by Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988) on power and politics in top management teams in the micro-computer industry showed that in high velocity environments, high uncertainty around resources amplified power and politics within teams (see also Thompson, 1967).

When power sensitized teams are confronted with organizational change, internal power struggles are a likely consequence. In order to stay competitive, organizations may often choose to reorganize or reprioritize (Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Hetland, 2012). Such organizational changes tend to pose a resource threat to organizational teams, as they may cause teams to lose out on budget, membership, or status (Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017). Also in this situation, we expect members that are sensitive to power to become mainly concerned about what this impending organizational change means for them personally, and as such to focus on their own personal survival — leading them to want to bolster their own individual power position. Support for this prediction can be found in work by Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al. (2017), who show in a field study that anticipated organizational change in teams increased social comparisons around position as well as team performance-detracting power struggles in teams with high power dispersion, but decreased these processes and dynamics in teams with low power dispersion.

When external team resource threats are absent, members are less likely to let their power sensitivity guide them and less likely to act out to preserve their power. For instance, when teams operate in very stable, collaborative, resource-abundant environments, and members' power positions are not threatened, members of power-sensitized teams may not vie with another for power (Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017). As such, we posit that power-sensitized teams (i.e. high-power teams and teams with high power-dispersion) will only experience team outcome-impairing power struggles when teams experience external team resource threats:

Proposition 3. *When teams face external resource threats, such as from intergroup conflict, environmental uncertainty, or organizational changes, power sensitivity will increase intra-team power struggles.*

Power struggles and team outcomes

Finally, we examine the downstream effects of our model on team outcomes, via intra-team power struggles. There are two key categories of team outcomes typically examined in the teams literature (Hackman, 1987; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). The first category is team performance outcomes, or the degree to which a team accomplishes its goals, as seen in task-indicators such as team output quality, quantity, and efficiency (Bell, 2007; Devine & Philips, 2001). The second category is team viability, or the ability of the team to continue into the future based on member willingness to remain part of the team, as seen in socio-affective indicators, such as team commitment, satisfaction, and turnover intentions (Balkundi & Harrison, 2006). We propose that intra-team power struggles jeopardize team performance and viability outcomes in various ways.

First, power struggles are likely to detract from team outcomes, as they distract members from their task at hand. Team members often struggle over power via political behaviors, such as coercion, lobbying, coalition formation, interruption, attempts to control, or impression management strategies (e.g., Keltner et al., 2008; Pettigrew, 1973; Pfeffer, 1981). For instance, when two members are vying for power, they may spread gossip about each other or ingratiate other members to get them on their side. They may also try to dominate team meetings by pushing their own agenda and interrupting or even ignoring their rival's input. As members' time and energy are fixed resources, investing in power struggles thus inevitably crowds out members' time and energy toward core team goals (Jehn, 1995). This directly hurts team performance, and when teams fail to meet goals, this can also negatively impact members' motivation to work in the team again (e.g., Weinberg & Ragan, 1979), harming team viability outcomes as well.

Second, power struggles ruin the foundations of intra-team cooperation. The typical manners in which people struggle for power (e.g., coercion) create tension and hostility (Georgesen & Harris, 2006; Mannix & Sauer,2006) among team members, which undermines psychological safety (De Hoogh et al., 2015), intra-team trust (De Jong & Elfring, 2010), and members' willingness to share information and cooperate with one another (Bendersky & Hays, 2012; Greer & Van Kleef,2010). When members are unwilling to cooperate together to achieve team goals, the value of teams are lost, and teams are unlikely to achieve their task goals (e.g., Pinto, Pinto, & Prescott, 1993; Smith, Carroll, & Ashford, 1995). Additionally, when teams evolve

a competitive, tense atmosphere in the team, members' emotional experience in the team is likely to be negatively impacted (e.g., Pinto et al., 1993; Smith et al., 1995), harming team viability as well.

Finally, power struggles in teams are contagious — once triggered by one or more members, power struggles can quickly spread throughout the entire team (e.g., Jehn et al., 2013). As people are sensitive to potential power loss (Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Mead & Maner,2012), once power struggles emerge, other members might feel threatened, and thereby involuntarily get involved in power struggles to protect their own power positions. For example, in a department meeting in a university, if one professor enters into a fight with another professor about the allocation of resources to different areas in the department, other professors might be concerned about the resources going to their own areas as well, and feel compelled to join in the fray, illustrating how power struggles spiral and can derail team goals, such as the outcomes of this department meeting. In sum, we suggest that power struggles can harm team performance and viability outcomes by distracting members from team task accomplishment and hurting collaborative processes (Greer & Van Kleef, 2010). We therefore propose:

Proposition 4. *Intra-team power struggles detract from team outcomes, such as team performance and viability.*

Summary of our conflict account of power in teams

In sum, in our conflict account of power in teams, we propose that the benefits that power has been shown to offer individuals may paradoxically lead power to, at times, corrupt social interactions in teams. This is because the benefits that power introduces for individuals may become a point of resentment and contention within a team. When at least one single high-power member in a team is present, this increases the sensitivity around power in the team, making all team members excessively responsive to resource allocations. This in turn, makes members likely to compete for power when they feel that their resources within the team are threatened, thereby spiraling team outcome-detracting power struggles. We hope with this account to fully explain why and when power can negatively impact teams. By understanding the mechanisms and levers by which power can harm teams, we can seek to remove the deleterious effects of power for team outcomes.

Discussion

As the epic power struggle between Apple's founder Steve Jobs and Apple's CEO John Sculley illustrates, power within the team context may have detrimental consequences for teams and their broader organizations. With our conflict account of power in teams, which emerges from our review of the literature on both the team-level and the individual-level effects of power, we aim to explain why and when power may harm teams. We outline below the immediate theoretical implications of our review and emergent model, and then address new and important topics for future research that our paper helps to open as viable and important channels for future research, including the need to identify the potential upsides of power for teams.

Theoretical implications

We first elaborate on the implications of our explanations for *how* power may corrupt team interactions. The assumption has been that power structures – especially power dispersion (e.g., Anderson et al., 2006; Keltner et al., 2008; Van Vugt et al., 2008) but also to a lesser extent power level (Pinkley et al., 1994; Tannenbaum, 1962) – serve team effectiveness. This assumption was derived from work which has found power to serve individual effectiveness (Adler et al., 2000; Berger et al., 1980; Davis & Moore 1945; Kipnis 1972; Sturm & Antonakis, 2015; Van Dijke & Poppe, 2006). However, our review shows that overall empirical evidence suggests the opposite to be true in teams — namely, that power in teams negatively relates to team outcomes (for a meta-analysis that reaches similar conclusions, see Greer, De Jong et al., 2017; Greer, Van Kleef et al., 2017). While we acknowledge that contingencies exist for the negative effects of power structures for teams, our work does point out that the past positive perspectives, which drew on the benefits of power for individuals to predict the functionality of power in teams (e.g., Halevy et al., 2011; Tannenbaum, 1962), do not adequately explain the data that has arisen in this area. As such, our findings qualify past functional perspectives on power in teams (e.g., Halevy et al., 2011), and suggest that conflict perspectives on how power may negatively impact team-level outcomes merit further attention and expansion.

To this end, we develop an emergent theoretical model in which we explicate *why* power may impair teams, or in other words why high-power teams and teams with high power dispersion tend to have lower team outcomes. For this, we reviewed, contrasted and then integrated the bourgeoning literature on power in teams (surrounding team power-level, team power-dispersion, and team power-struggles) with the literature on the individual-level effects of power. This resulted in our emergent theory in which we introduced the concept of power sensitivity and explained that the largely detrimental effects of power for teams (e.g., Bloom, 1999; Tarakci et al., 2016; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017; see also a recent meta-analysis to this effect — Greer, De Jong et al., 2017; Greer, Van Kleef et al., 2017) can be understood by the predominantly positive effects of power for individuals (for reviews, see Fiske, 2010; Galinsky et al., 2016; Guinote, 2007; Tost, 2016). Power sensitivity, or members' strong reactivity to resources in the team, stems from having at least one high power member in the team, which signals the benefits of power to individuals. This saliency of the benefits of power makes power a desirable and sought-after good, thereby increasing the likelihood of members socially comparing against one another and ultimately competing with one another for power. The identification of members' power sensitivity as the mechanism through

which team power structures affect power dynamics has important implications for both the team-level as well as the individual-level literatures on power. For the team-level, power sensitivity is a synthesizing construct as it explains both the effects of team power-level and the effects of team power dispersion on team dynamics and outcomes. This suggests that contextual research that has been performed with high power teams may apply to high power dispersed teams as well and vice versa. For the individual-level, power-sensitivity can be viewed as a new negative effect of power for the power-holder. The positive effects of power have been largely found in isolated laboratory contexts where power holders were safe in their power position (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2003, 2006). However, in the real-life setting of a team, power is often contested precisely because it is so beneficial (Bendersky & Hays, 2012; Hays & Bendersky, 2015; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017), and in such settings it is possible that power sensitivity may also impair individual outcomes, as well as team outcomes. As such, we extend conflict perspectives on power in teams (e.g., Bloom, 1999; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Tarakci et al., 2016; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017) by showing in our review that having power in a social setting is not an unequivocally positive experience, and then explaining in our emergent theory how the downsides of power comes about in teams via increased conflict sensitivity.

Last, with our model we clarify *when* power can harm teams. While power sensitivity can be seen as a precursor for power struggles, power sensitive members do not always struggle with each other for power. There needs to be a trigger that ignites power struggles in power sensitive teams, and we argue that a resource threat may function as such a trigger. When members either experience a personal resource threat, due to, for instance, inequitable or illegitimate resource allocation within the team (Lammers et al., 2008; Martorana et al., 2005), or when there is an external resource threat, due to for example an intergroup conflict or scarcity (Pfeffer & Moore, 1980; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017), they are much more likely to act upon their power sensitivity. This contextual view is important for both team-level as well as individual-level research on power. For team-level research (Brett et al., 1996; Chattopadhyay et al., 2010; Greer et al., 2011; Greer and Van Kleef, 2010; Groysberg et al., 2011; Halevy et al., 2011; , 2012; Pinkley et al., 1994; Swaab et al., 2014), this implies that threats both inside and outside of the team may jeopardize the effectiveness of team power structures (see also Greer, De Jong et al., 2017; Greer, Van Kleef et al., 2017 for the call for a more contextualized view on power in teams), and therefore it is important to identify what these threats are. For individual-level power research (Fiske, 2010; Galinsky et al., 2016; Guinote, 2007; Smith & Galinsky, 2010; Tost, 2016), our emergent theory implies that power in a threatening social context may be utilized as a tool to protect oneself. The utilization of power as a protection tool has hitherto been under-researched as a strategy for individuals to mitigate threat. For team-level power research, this implies that more effort needs to be given towards understanding when threats in a team's environment will ignite power struggles in teams, as opposed to unifying teams as researchers have commonly assumed will happen in the face of team threats (e.g., Brewer, 2001; Tajfel, 1982).

Future research directions

With our conflict account of power in teams, we focus on why and when team power structures foster competitive power dynamics in teams. We identified two categories of factors, both internal (personal threats) and external (resource threats) to the team, that are likely to ignite the link between power sensitivity and team outcome-detracting power struggles. However, there is room for future research to investigate other mitigating factors that may discourage power sensitive teams from getting embroiled in power struggles. One important factor may be whether members view power as fixed or as expandable. In our theory, we propose that members tend to view power as zero-sum, i.e., a non-expandable pie (e.g., Lawler, 1992; Meegan, 2010), and that this is why power sensitive teams tend to fall prey to power struggles. However, teams may also view power as non-fixed and expandable, meaning that one member's power gain does not detract from other members' power (Tannenbaum, 1962). In teams where members have this belief, power sensitivity does not necessarily have to lead to power struggles. As it is likely that there will always be teams that are high power and/or power dispersed, it is important to identify situations that mitigate the harmful effects of these power structures, for instance by fostering expandable-pie beliefs.

Another key future research direction lies in understanding why and when power could *benefit* teams. Our goal with our emergent theory here was to make sense of the negative conclusion from our review – that power hurts team outcomes, and understand how it could be reconciled with more positive perspectives on power from the individual-level of theory and analysis. We therefore focused on explaining when and why negative effects of power can occur in teams, but we do acknowledge that these effects are highly contextually dependent – in teams without resource threats (such as a government office with a 5-year guaranteed budget), power in teams, be it power dispersion or power level, may not negatively influence team outcomes. In such and other situations, in which members do not feel vulnerable in their power position, power in teams may actually even benefit team outcomes. For instance, when team members do not see power as fixed sum (i.e., your power gain, is my power loss) but more an expandable pie (e.g., you have power in this domain, I have power in another domain), power may help rather than hurt teams. We leave it for future research to understand the how, why, and when of this more positive pathway. Potential avenues could include looking at what power does to motivation, shared understandings of task, and speed of action in teams.

Yet another key future research direction is understanding how the different bases of power that are present in teams may interrelate. In teams, multiple bases of power may be present (French & Raven, 1959). When teams have high power-base diversity, such that different members each control different types of power bases, this may help reduce power struggles in teams, by reducing the likelihood of social comparison, threat, and conflict (e.g., Hall & Crisp, 2005). Indeed, research suggests that members may actually even seek out such power-base diversity across members. Namely, research shows that when power is salient, individuals help each other carve out unique identities (i.e. "the poor are happier", e.g., Kay & Jost, 2003; Rucker et al., 2012), and create an optimal differentiation in the team which can improve members' self-esteem and thereby cooperation (Brewer, 2012). These positive processes in turn can improve team and individual outcomes. However, power diversity also has the potential to hurt teams. Some research has suggested that the presence of multiple bases of power in a team can promote conflict among different political positions (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1977). Other related research suggests that allowing members unique areas in which they can exert influence can create representational gaps and different thought worlds which may clash (Cronin & Weingart, 2007; Dougherty, 1992). One way to reconcile these different views is to examine the role of a 'hierarchy of hierarchies'. Greer, Dannals, and Rao (2016) provided the evidence which suggests that teams are most functional when a clear hierarchy exists, but everyone in the team has their own distinct power base. By having an overall hierarchy to bridge across the different power bases, this can allow a coordination mechanism to align different power areas, reducing politics and conflict. Additionally, by having clearly distinct power roles within a power-dispersed team, this can reduce power sensitivity and ensuing power struggles by reducing the relevance of social comparisons across ranks. For example, in an early stage start-up, it's critical that all members acknowledge the CEO as the overall leader, but teams will perform best when each member has their own unique area of esteem and ownership within the start-up, be it owning a certain piece of code or being in charge of managing the relationships with a set of clients. Future investigation into how the different bases of power in teams shape member positions and team interactions is therefore essential. For example, questions could include assessing when power-base differences are good or bad for teams, how members compose their own unique profiles of power bases in teams, and when and why an overarching hierarchy across power bases is needed.

A final key future research direction lies in understanding the temporal dynamics of power in teams. While research has often suggested that power disparities may be self-reinforcing and stable over time in groups (e.g., Magee & Galinsky, 2008), other research suggests that power levels can and do change in groups (e.g., Aime et al., 2014; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Tarakci et al., 2016; Van Bunderen, Greer et al., 2017; Van Bunderen, Van Knippenberg et al., 2017). In understanding the potential temporal dynamics of power over time, several important questions exist. One area of questions extends to how and why power changes in teams. Is there a natural pendulum in teams, such that teams swing back and forth between the extremes of high and low power dispersion, or otherwise said, hierarchy and equality? If so, what prompts swings in either direction? And how can such swings be guided? Research has shown that swings to high power-dispersion, may encounter more resistance than swings to low power dispersion (e.g., Hollenbeck, Ellis, Humphrey, Garza, & Ilgen, 2011), suggesting that swings in that direction may require more intentional management than pushes towards equality.

A related set of questions extends to when power is in a temporal sense more or less functional for teams. Matusik, Hays, and Galinsky (2017) suggests that power disparities are more useful in the short run than in the long run. However, questions remain as to what the tipping point is to shift power differences from functional to dysfunctional for teams. Similarly, questions exist as to the length of time that power dispersion is useful for teams. And finally, there are questions about whether teams, in order to be functional, should naturally cycle through the hierarchy-equality pendulum. For example, Navy seal teams have often traditionally struggled with the balance between hierarchy and equality. The military itself is a highly hierarchical, power dispersed organization, yet Navy seal teams have to operate in complex, uncertain situations where the ability of all members on the team to speak up and have voice in determining action can be essential. This struggle has led them to separate their hierarchical structure by the phase of their interactions. They endorse active hierarchical structures on the ground while on missions, but when they reconvene for debriefings, they emphasize egalitarian structures, as hallmarked by literally removing their rank bars at the door before entering their debriefing meeting. This example raises the question whether highly functional teams are able to naturally shift their power structure to match the situation, or are such shifts so difficult that teams with different structures should be convened for different tasks?

Conclusion

Our review of the growing literature on power in teams suggests that power can have a negative influence on the functioning and outcomes of organizational teams. Understanding why and when this negative influence comes into play is essential for both researchers and practitioners seeking to improve team effectiveness. We developed an emergent theory to suggest that the very reasons that make power great for individuals may paradoxically make power problematic for teams. When the benefits of power become salient (when there is at least one high power member in the team), teams become sensitized to power. When teams face resource threats, this power sensitivity ignites into team outcome-detracting power struggles. By understanding why and when the dark side of power can unfold in teams, we hope to open the door for future research to understand how, why, and when power can become a useful tool for the effectiveness of organizational teams.

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